United Nations A/70/PV.84

General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

84th plenary meeting
Friday, 12 February 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft ..... (Denmark)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 138 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/70/722/Add.1, A/70/722/Add.2, A/70/722/Add.3, A/70/722/Add.4, A/70/722/Add.5 and A/70/722/Add.6)

The President: Before proceeding to the other items on our agenda, I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/70/722/Add.1, A/70/722/Add.2, A/70/722/Add.3, A/70/722/Add.4, A/70/722/Add.5 and A/70/722/Add.6, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/70/722, Bahrain, Burundi, the Dominican Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Vanuatu and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Draft resolution (A/70/L.31/Rev.1)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 9, jointly with agenda item 15, at its 36th plenary meeting, on 19 October 2015. Members will also recall that, under agenda item 9, the Assembly adopted resolution 70/78, at its 70th plenary, on 9 December 2015.

I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.31/Rev.1.

Ms. Niyomthai (Thailand): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Republic of Angola, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.31/Rev.1, entitled "Graduation of Angola from the least developed country category".

We would like to stress the need for a smooth transition strategy for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries. It is therefore important to acknowledge the realities on the ground and the structural weaknesses that Angola faces. We ask its development partners to be forthcoming in recognizing those vulnerabilities and to continue to provide assistance for the country's smooth transition and long-term development.

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to thank all partners involved in the negotiations on the draft resolution's text, and we hope the General Assembly will adopt it by consensus.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.31/Rev.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 70/253).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-03666 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The President: I now call on the representative of Angola, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for scheduling this plenary meeting to consider agenda item 9, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", and to take action on resolution 70/253, regarding Angola's graduation from the leastdeveloped country category. It is indeed a great honour for me to address the General Assembly today and to reaffirm my country's commitment to the graduation process.

I also wish to express our gratitude for the positive and constructive comments, support and encouragement from Member States during the informal consultations, which enabled us to reach an agreement on the text. I would especially like to thank Mr. Alain Wilfried Biya, Second Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Cameroon, who facilitated the discussion of the text.

In the past decade, Angola and the Angolan economy have witnessed strong growth. The country was commended by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for both its macroeconomic stability and its economic growth, which resulted in recommendations from the United Nations proposing Angola's graduation from the group of least developed countries. Nevertheless, we recognize that Angola, a commodity-dependent developing country, is currently experiencing a slightly difficult economic period due to the drop in international oil prices, which has affected the entire world economy. Recent external shocks, including the global economic crisis and the decrease in commodity prices, have triggered an economic slowdown and highlighted the fact that diversification is crucial to the sustained growth of the Angolan economy.

As of now — and we have started right at the beginning of the year — in terms of diversification purposes, Angola has adopted and is still implementing various programmes aimed at helping it to adjust to the changes in its national economy and in the world.

The National Development Strategy, which is the main vehicle for economic diversification until 2025, is being implemented. The aim is to guide and improve the pace and quality of development in the following ways: improving the quality of life of Angolans, preserving macroeconomic stability, promoting an active employment policy and enhancing national human resources, and increasing productivity and transformation in the markets. In addition, the Angola Invests programme is intended to support small companies focused on agriculture, industry, retail, fishing and other sectors with a view to diversifying the economy and increasing business activities. Moreover, the Medium-term Agriculture Sector Development Plan seeks to achieve growth and improve the production of cereals, fruits, vegetables, roots and tubers to make the country self-sufficient in food.

Given the significant drop of oil prices, the authorities have adjusted the State budget to take into account more conservative assumptions. The Council of Ministers has approved a national strategy to face the current difficulties by replacing oil as the main source of revenues, controlling the expansion of the deficit and promoting debt sustainability, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of private investments, increasing domestic production and promotomg the export of goods and services in the short and medium terms.

As the text of the resolution on graduation reaffirms, graduating from the category of least developed country should not result in a disruption to development plans, programmes and projects. It is therefore our opinion that the Government of Angola still needs to build a resilient and sustainable economy as a pathway towards a real graduation from the list of least developed countries. The Istanbul Programme of Action envisions a smooth transition period for graduating countries. Angola sees such a transition as a precondition for any eventual graduation, so as to ensure that negative impacts are addressed through policy interventions aimed at each respective vulnerability and at capacity development.

Angola would like to note that in the course of negotiating the resolution, we were able to witness the full commitment of the Member States in the Assembly to that fundamental principle. As we are now facing challenging times and are engaged in improving our economic diversification and reducing our social vulnerabilities, it is encouraging to see that the international community stands by Angola.

My delegation understands that our request to be afforded, on an exceptional basis, an additional preparatory period of two years before the start of the three-year period leading to graduation is well received and appropriate. The additional preparatory period will enable Angola to craft and implement policies and strategies focused on, among other things, strengthening structural reforms to safeguard macroeconomic stability

and debt sustainability; continuing investments in the non-oil sector; strengthening the business environment to generate diversification and job creation, mainly in agriculture, electricity, manufacturing and services; improving the quality and skills of human resources; and, finally, strengthening our educational sector.

Angola is overcoming the consequences of several decades of sociopolitical crises and is willing to graduate from the least-developed-country status. We look forward to working with the United Nations system and other partners in putting in place balanced and development-oriented strategies and policies, as well as the necessary assistance to help address the development challenges that we face.

The resolution just adopted demonstrates the support and goodwill of the international community to see developing countries such as Angola achieve sustainable development. On behalf of the Government of Angola, I would once again like to take this opportunity to sincerely express our gratitude for all the invaluable support of the international community. Angola wishes to express special thanks to the members of the Group of 77 and China, as well as the members of the least developed countries. I am also very grateful to our development partners especially the European Union, the United States of America and Australia, for their invaluable support. We look forward to members' support in that endeavour.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 9.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(f) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/70/689)

The President: As indicated in the note contained in document A/70/689, as a result of the expiration of the term of office, on 31 December 2016, of Mr. Jorge Flores Callejas of Honduras, the General Assembly is required, during its current session, to appoint a person to serve as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a full term of office beginning on 1 January 2017 and ending on 31 December 2021.

In accordance with the procedures described in article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, and having consulted the regional group concerned, I have requested Honduras to propose a candidate to fill the vacancy.

I would like to remind members that, in accordance with resolution 59/267, of 23 December 2004, the candidate should have experience in at least one of the following fields: oversight, audit, inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, project evaluation, programme evaluation, human resources management, management, public administration, monitoring and/or programme performance, as well as knowledge of the United Nations system and its role in international relations.

As also indicated in document A/70/689, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with paragraph 2, article 3, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, I submit to the Assembly the candidature of Mr. Jorge Flores Callejas of Honduras for re-appointment as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for an additional five-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2017 and expiring on 31 December 2021.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to re-appoint the candidate?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 114.

Agenda items 16 and 117 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674)

Draft resolution A/70/L.41

The President: I should like to inform members that the letter dated 22 December 2015 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly introducing the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism has been circulated in document A/70/675.

Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 16, and adopted resolutions 70/19 and 70/20, at its 66th plenary meeting, on 3 December 2015, and adopted resolution 70/109, at its 72nd plenary meeting, on 10 December 2015.

Members will also recall that the Secretary-General briefed members informally on 15 January about the Plan. Today, we will take action on the short, procedural draft resolution A/70/L.41, which welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative. In doing so, we will deliver a clear signal that the General Assembly is gravely concerned by the issue of violent extremism. I thank all members for their cooperation and constructive engagement in the preparation of the draft resolution.

Today, sadly, violent extremism is on the rise across the world. All too often, a number of members' Governments and peoples have been confronted by waves of terrorist attacks, violence and intimidation. The pain, fear and destruction caused by those acts present real and difficult challenges for all Member States.

As a phenomenon, violent extremism is not new. In our age, the risk is that radicalized individuals may gain access to, and then proceed to use, tools that can inflict mass killing and significant destruction. Some extremists are already skillfully exploiting the Internet to spread their message of hate and violence as never before — messages that are contrary to the commitment to peace that brings us together in this Hall.

Confronting and preventing violent extremism is fundamental to protecting our societies and our people. But to be truly effective, our approach to prevention must remain faithful to our common values and our common humanity. And it must secure peace and security in a manner that respects human rights and the rule of law and advances sustainable development.

I commend the Secretary-General for his timely initiative and for preparing his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Collectively, we must tackle this issue with the urgency it so obviously requires. Today's debate is an opportunity to advance the global debate on that complex issue and to discuss how better to use the tools and resources we have to tackle the drivers of this phenomenon. I look forward to hearing the contributions of Member States.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/70/L.41.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.41?

Draft resolution A/70/L.41 was adopted (resolution 70/254).

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vale de Almeida (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on such an important issue. It offers a new opportunity for the European Union and its member States to reiterate their support for the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We are still analysing the concrete recommendations from the perspective of coherence and coordination, including the funding aspects, with ongoing initiatives conducted by United Nations and non-United Nations entities. But certainly, the Plan of Action constitutes a clear and balanced tool to help States in their efforts to prevent violent extremism.

We welcome the connections the Plan of Action makes between preventing conflicts and preventing violent extremism. A conflict-prevention and peacebuilding approach applied at all levels can indeed make a significant contribution to preventing violent extremism. This approach includes, first, promoting good governance, including through security sector reform; secondly, tackling political, social and economic exclusion; and thirdly, last but not least, promoting human rights and opportunities for all. We also welcome the links made by the Plan of Action to the Sustainable Development Goals, including the gender perspective.

Most of the Plan's content reflects what the European Union has been working on now for more than a decade. Internally, since 2004, we have had in place our own prevention strategy — reviewed in 2014 — and a general European Union counter-terrorism strategy since 2005, which includes prevention as one of its pillars. Moreover, the strategy and regional action

plans on foreign terrorist fighters from the European Union, such as those for Syria, Iraq and the Sahel, include preventing radicalization as a key priority. The conclusions adopted recently by the Council of the European Union state the need to establish counter-terrorism action plans that include countering violent extremism, with priority to countries in the Middle East and North Africa region.

The EU is also actively participating in several initiatives, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the Hedayah Centre in Abu Dhabi and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, which are mobilizing expertise aimed at preventing violent extremism. As can be seen, EU internal and external efforts on prevention are in line with the United Nations Plan of Action.

We welcome today's resolution 70/254, by which the international community is sending a united message of engagement in the prevention of violent extremism. The matter will remain high on our agenda, and we look forward to engaging in further discussions in the context of the upcoming Geneva conference in April and the tenth anniversary review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in June.

Ms. Vilde (Latvia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Estonia, Lithuania and my own country, Latvia. We align ourselves with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union. We express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for organizing this timely debate.

The magnitude of the threat emanating from the spread of violent extremism requires united and coordinated collective action. There is a growing need for credible political solutions and a more comprehensive approach to meeting the increasing challenges posed by violent extremism. In that regard, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General and the efforts taken in the preparation of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We also welcome the adoption of the procedural resolution 70/254, which is a consistent next step for further substantive and inclusive dialogue on the matter. Although more time is needed for thorough analysis of the recommendations contained in the Plan of Action, we would like to emphasize a few areas of action that deserve special attention.

First, we commend the fact that Plan of Action addresses the root causes of violent extremism and emphasizes systematic preventive efforts, including conflict prevention. We appreciate the links with the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, particularly those related to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, gender equality and women's empowerment and accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Secondly, the cross-border nature of violent extremism requires action at global, regional and national levels. Although the primary responsibility for preventing violent extremism lies with Member States, national efforts must go hand in hand with enhanced regional cooperation. Also, regional instruments need to be strengthened. In that regard, a good example is the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, which was opened for signature in Riga last October and has already been signed by almost half of the Council's member States. The Riga Protocol is the first regional legal instrument to implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), on foreign terrorist fighters, and its special focus is on the prevention of terrorist training and travel abroad for the purpose of terrorism.

Finally, in the age of the Internet and social media it is impossible to fight violent extremism without efficient communications strategies based on international human rights standards. Preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism should not become a pretext for repressive action against free speech, whether online or offline. We have to make sure that our actions aimed at preventing violent extremism are fully in line with existing human rights obligations. Promoting the freedom of expression, pluralism, and protecting journalists should be important components of those efforts.

We once again thank you, Mr. President, for facilitating this pertinent discussion, and we look forward to further deliberations.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia): In Saudi Arabia's capacity as the coordinator on counter-terrorism within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and on behalf of the countries of the OIC, I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening today's debate, which affords an opportunity to the member and observer States of the United Nations to express their views on violent extremism and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

The OIC believes that violent extremism and terrorism undermine our shared objectives of a

peaceful and prosperous world, and that no country in the world is immune to the effects of violent extremism and terrorism. The OIC therefore supports efforts at the national, regional and international levels to prevent violent extremism and terrorism. In that regard, the OIC welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to develop a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, and takes note of the Plan of Action (A/70/674).

The OIC reaffirms its unequivocal rejection of all attempts to associate any country, race, religion, culture or nationality with violent extremism and terrorism. While the OIC emphasizes that there is no agreed definition of violent extremism, it fully subscribes to the need to prevent that phenomenon. The OIC believes that a comprehensive preventive approach to violent extremism should address its local and external drivers in a balanced manner. Cooperative efforts at the international level must be conducted in full respect of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The OIC has a principled position against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomsoever and wherever. The OIC recognizes that terrorism cannot be tackled by security or military means alone and underlines the need to attach due attention to, and devising concrete plans for, addressing the various dimensions and root causes of terrorism.

We also consider it important to address the root causes of the global phenomenon of terrorism, violence and extremism and the means to address them at the political, economic, social and intellectual levels. In that vein, the OIC recalls the provisions of resolutions 68/127 and 70/109, on a world against violence and violent extremism.

On a comprehensive approach to tackle terrorism, the OIC believes that due attention and concrete plans of action must address the following aspects and dimensions of the phenomenon of terrorism: the political and socioeconomic contexts that bring forth conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism, such as continued economic deprivation, exclusion, alienation, separation and marginalization of people, and the forced dismantling of political, legal, security and sociocultural institutions; the deep impact and legacy of historical injustices done to colonized peoples or those under occupation, their suffering and the forced destruction of their national institutions, culture and identity and the denial of their rights to self-determination; the potential of external actors penetrating terrorist and extremist groups for the purpose of serving their own political agenda and the threat of non-Arab and non-Muslim fighters; and the need to counter all types of radical extremist discourse, including through the media and new communications technologies, particularly the Internet, in order to delegitimize the violent and manipulative acts committed in the name of religion, ideology or claims of cultural superiority.

The OIC stresses the importance of integrating youth and women in the efforts and decision-making processes regarding violent extremism, while we also underscore that children and youth represent the future of society and that failure to protect their rights can contribute to an environment conducive to crime and violent extremism. In that regard, the OIC recalls and welcomes the Security Council open debate on the role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace, organized under Jordan's presidency of the Security Council in April 2015 (see S/PV.7432), which brought this important matter to the attention of the international community and served as a transparent and vital platform to discuss Member States' views on the matter.

The OIC expresses serious concern about the increase in intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, resulting in the upsurge of Islamophobia, a phenomenon that is an affront to the human rights and dignity of Muslims. The OIC recalls the Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, entitled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief" as an important tool to counter radicalization, marginalization and alienation. Furthermore, the OIC calls for the resolution's effective implementation by the international community as a means to deprive terrorist groups of any justification for violent extremism on the grounds of ethno-religious stigmatization and discrimination.

The OIC calls upon all States to prevent any advocacy of religious discrimination, hostility or violence and defamation of Islam by incorporating legal and administrative measures that render defamation illegal and punishable by law. The OIC also urges member and observer States to adopt specific and relevant educational measures at all levels.

The OIC recognizes the importance of interfaith and intercultural dialogue as an effective mechanism to combat extremism and incitement to hatred based on religion. The OIC also recognizes the efforts made by the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in that regard.

The OIC reaffirms the need for the effective and comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) and the need for a robust follow-up mechanism to be in place. The OIC also considers it imperative to respect the views and positions of Member and Observer States and to develop consensus by taking them into account during consideration of the pertinent agenda items of the General Assembly and other relevant processes.

OIC member States support resolution 70/254, adopted a short while ago, which welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and takes note of his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. To that end, the OIC stands ready to engage positively with all Member and Observer States in a thorough and constructive examination of the Secretary-General's Plan.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): We also would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this formal debate on such an important issue.

We thank the Secretary-General for his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), which Australia fully supports. Furthermore, we are pleased that the General Assembly has adopted resolution 70/254, which welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General. Through the resolution, Member States have sent a unified message of their commitment to tackle violent extremism. We have also heard some very encouraging words from Saudi Arabia in terms of our broad support.

The Plan recognizes that we cannot afford to wait until people have already been radicalized and turned to violence. That is in line with Australia's approach to countering violent extremism, which aims to reduce the risk of violent extremism by intervening early and tackling the root of the problem. The Plan also provides a framework to carry forward the work done globally throughout 2015 through the regional summits on countering violent extremism, including the one held in Sydney in June 2015. The Plan's call for countries to develop national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism underscores the need for the international community to deal effectively with the global terrorist threat. We support the Plan's recommendation that national plans to prevent violent extremism be developed to address national conditions.

Australia is committed to a regional and international approach to meet the shared challenges of violent extremism and is active regionally through capacity-building programmes on countering violent extremism. Violent extremism is an increasing threat to world security and stability that undermines human rights and sustainable development. On a related point, Australia strongly supports the modernization of the directives on peace and security of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to dispel any ambiguity over the use of eligible official development assistance funds in countering violent extremism

Australia also supports the proposal for a whole-of-United-Nations approach to implement the Plan and believes that there is significant capacity for implementation through existing mechanisms, such as the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). The GCERF has an established Government/private-partnership framework designed to deliver grants for community-based projects on countering violent extremism. The GCERF is uniquely placed to contribute to the effective implementation of the Plan, which acknowledges the importance of engaging communities, empowering youth and women and promoting education as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing the drivers of violent extremism.

Australia looks forward to engaging in further discussions on the Plan at the meeting on countering violent extremism to be hosted by Switzerland in Geneva, and in the context of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank you, President Lykketoft, for your leadership and support for the Secretary-General's visionary initiative to fight terrorism through preventing extremism. The General Assembly's consensus adoption of resolution 70/254 today sends a strong message that we are united in confronting terrorism and the poisonous ideologies that sustain it.

Threats from violent extremism, especially when leading to terrorism, undermine security and development around the globe. From Jakarta to San Bernardino, from Paris to Ouagadougou, terrorists

seek to expand their reach and resonance. They exploit ongoing conflicts, join forces with criminal networks, find safe haven in weak and repressive States and propagate hate and recruit via social media. Even as we work to defeat and degrade the most virulent terrorist group — Da'esh — we know that defeating terrorists on the battlefield is not enough. This is indeed a new war of ideas.

The terrorist threats will not be defeated with bombs or military means alone. Such measures will not succeed unless we also address the fundamental drivers of violent extremism. We must find ways to prevent our people from being radicalized in the first place, which makes them vulnerable to terrorist recruitment. And we must do so in ways that do not engender more sympathy and more support for terrorist causes. If we fail to do so, we will forever find ourselves in a vicious cycle of tit-for-tat with terrorists, with countless innocent lives lost.

That is why it is so very critical to address the conditions conducive to terrorism and implement human-rights-based counter-terrorism programs within the rule of law. Many countries have already begun this journey, developing concrete national action plans to counter violent extremists and to better address the drivers of radicalization. To boost those efforts, a Leaders Summit was held in New York last September on countering the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and violent extremism, during which many world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to preventing and countering violent extremism. The Secretary-General now has presented his own vision on how to mobilize the United Nations in pursuit of those same goals.

The United States strongly welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), and we commend him for his initiative. The Plan provides actionable recommendations that States should begin to consider immediately. In addition, the Plan provides a framework for the United Nations system, with all of its various agencies, offices, missions and programmes, to advance these goals as well. The United States particularly welcomes the Plan's core recommendation that each Member State develop its own comprehensive national action plan to prevent and counter violent extremism. We also support the Plan's call for greater regional and international planning to prevent and counter violent extremism. Such cross-border cooperation is critical in today's interconnected world.

We also underscore the importance of involving a diverse range of Government and non-Government stakeholders in developing and implementing such plans. The Plan of Action's call for an interdisciplinary, all-of-society approach is critical. Progress can be achieved only through an integrated approach that includes national and local Governments, the private sector, young people, women, religious and educational leaders and civil society more broadly. But there is truly no one-size-fits-all solution to those challenges. For that reason, we strongly welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that national action plans be tailored to local conditions. Our Governments have learned the lesson over many years that local perspectives and conditions must be taken into account in any effective approach to the prevention of violent extremism. We also welcome the emphasis that the Plan places on strengthening good governance as well as promoting human rights and the rule of law. They are essential ingredients in any effort to eliminate the drivers of violent extremism.

Finally, the United States appreciates the fact that the Plan of Action provides the basis for the first-ever approach encompassing the entire United Nations for implementing key parts of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. To stay ahead of that threat, the United Nations must improve the coordination among its many internal offices and agencies. The United States looks forward to working closely with partners, both among Member States and United Nations bodies, to ensure that the Organization is positioned as well as possible to support implementation of the Plan's recommendations. That means making existing assistance more directly relevant to preventing violent extremism in specific contexts, as well as designing new programmes.

Different countries have different perspectives on this challenge. We may even disagree about the particular factors that drive radicalization in our diverse societies. We will have ample time to continue this dialogue, including at a major United Nations meeting in Geneva this spring and during the General Assembly's review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the summer. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General's Plan of Action provides a framework today, with a set of principles that can help us accomplish our shared goals of fighting terrorism and confronting violent ideologies. We encourage the Assembly to unite behind those goals.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to associate myself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to emphasize that we believe the Plan of Action to Prevention Violent Extremism (A/70/674) presented by the Secretary-General on 15 January to be of major importance. France therefore welcomes the fact that the General Assembly has today decided to show its unanimous support for that initiative by adopting resolution 70/254, which is brief but goes to the heart of the issue. The Plan of Action is designed to unite and better coordinate the efforts that all of us, both as Member States and in the United Nations, at the national, regional and international levels, are making to prevent radicalization — an essential aspect of the fight against terrorism. It represents the practical realization of the strategic role that the United Nations should play today in guiding and coordinating action in the area.

More specifically, since one of the goals of this debate is to tackle the substance of the issue, the seven areas identified by the Secretary-General, particularly that of engaging young people, are, in our view, very relevant. The recommendations to Member States are also particularly welcome and will, we hope, help to strengthen the effectiveness of the action taken by the international community.

The prevention of radicalization and violent extremism is a national priority for France, and we are very engaged in that area. For us, that threat is represented not just by the 254 French fighters who have returned home from Syria and Iraq but also includes the nearly 1,900 French nationals or residents involved with jihadi affiliates, including 597 on the ground. In that regard, I would like to cite some of the measures that France has taken, many of which are in the areas of action identified by the Secretary-General.

The essentially preventive dimension of our efforts has been deployed in our national plan for combating violent radicalization and terrorist networks, which was adopted in April 2014. That plan set up a hotline for families and others worried about their loved ones. So far, our interministerial committee on crime prevention and radicalization has received more than 7,000 reports of persons at risk of being radicalized. We are also working on the speedy creation of a support centre for young people returning from conflict zones, who will not be prosecuted by the courts.

Along with that, a year ago, we established an Internet site focused on stopping jihadism and aimed at young people at risk of being radicalized and their families and friends, now with the addition of a related Twitter account and Facebook page to help to disseminate messages on social networks aimed at countering propaganda. We are also working to prevent radicalization through the Internet, including by blocking websites and removing content that glorifies terrorism. We have already blocked several sites in France under a law enacted on 13 November 2014, and we have established a close and constructive dialogue with major Internet companies. These are just a few examples, and France will, of course, continue with its commitment in the area, taking into account the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Cardi (Italy), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The sequence of events that has begun today with our debate in the General Assembly and will continue in Geneva in April and in New York in June with the review of our Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, is particularly timely and gives us an opportunity to reflect together on how States can take ownership of and implement the Secretary-General's recommendations. France welcomes the chance to participate in that process, with the aim of strengthening and making more effective our collective action to prevent the kind of violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

Mr. Charwath (Austria): At the outset, I would, of course, like to stress that Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered just now by the observer of the European Union.

Austria welcomes and supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We are heartened by the fact that the General Assembly is in a position to welcome that important initiative. We appreciate the balanced and comprehensive nature of the document and welcome its recommendations for concrete measures to be operationalized, both within the United Nations and nationally and regionally by Member States. Austria commends the Secretary-General for taking a lead in promoting efforts at the local and national levels to prevent violent extremism, since it is those kinds of measures that will produce the most concrete results. We support the Plan's areas of focus, particularly regarding young people, and commend the emphasis on measures aimed at strengthening good governance, human rights

and the rule of law, all of which are indispensable to the effective prevention of violent extremism and the fight against terrorism, as a couple of speakers before me have already stressed.

Austria looks forward to the implementation of the Plan of Action and of national and regional measures. We recognize that their effective implementation is the responsibility of each and every individual Member State, with the participation of local communities and civil society. We have already put in place a number of measures aimed at preventing violent extremism, with a particular focus on integration and social inclusion and human rights and gender equality, as well as intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

In the framework of Austria's national action plan on integration, those measures were developed after broad consultations, including with communities and civil society. Their implementation is being monitored by an expert body. We encourage other States Members of the United Nations also to implement the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which we are endorsing today. Austria looks forward to supporting the Plan of Action, also in relation to the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the President for convening today's plenary meeting of the General Assembly. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for submitting his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

In recent years violent extremist forces, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), have been expanding their presence in Iraq and Syria. That represents an increasing danger and poses a serious threat to peace and stability in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Recently, terrorist forces have demonstrated new features. First, their groups are more tightly knit. They control larger areas and use those areas as bases for spreading extremist ideologies, for carrying out terrorist attacks and for sending terrorists to the rest of the world.

Secondly, the networks of the international terrorist forces are expanding their activities. Terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Boko Haram have been coordinating with each other from afar and have launched attacks from multiple regions and countries, causing enormous damages and harm.

Thirdly, terrorist groups have been scaling up their use of new technology, such as the Internet and social media, and they have been plotting, organizing and financing terrorist activities and spreading extremist and violent ideologies to poison youth and encourage young people mired in difficult situations to join violent extremist groups.

Fourthly, terrorism and regional hotspots are interconnected. Terrorist groups exploit regional hotspots to step up their terrorist activities, thereby making the settlement of regional conflicts even more difficult and aggravating existing humanitarian crises.

In fighting terrorism and violent extremism, the international community should stay united, strengthen its coordination and form synergies. In that connection, I would like to make the following points.

First, in order to give full play to the coordinating and leading role of the United Nations and the Security Council, countries should fully implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). The international community should, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other accepted norms of international relations, give full play to the coordinating and leading role of the United Nations and form a united front to fight terrorism and scale up its efforts to do that at the global level. We can defeat terrorist groups only through effective coordination.

Secondly, we must adhere to unified criteria and standards and fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Double standards should be avoided. We should never link terrorism with any specific ethnicity or religion. The Security Council has adopted resolutions on fighting terrorist groups, such as ISIS. Other terrorist groups have been placed on the sanctions lists. Countries should be resolute in their fight against violent extremist groups, especially those on the consolidated Security Council sanctions list.

Thirdly, the international community should focus on combating terrorist organizations that engage in terrorist activities through the Internet and social media. They issue violent audiovisual products, spread extremist ideologies, recruit people, raise funds and

plot terrorist activities. Measures should therefore be taken to fight against such crimes. Countries should strengthen their cooperation in the regulation of the Internet, and the relevant United Nations agencies should also coordinate in formulating measures to strengthen such regulation. Furthermore, Member States should, in a coordinated manner, fight crimes perpetrated by terrorist groups using the Internet.

Fourthly, the root causes of the problems should be addressed. We must focus on economic and social development and promote the stabilization of situations in turbulent areas. The international community should pay more attention to the political settlement of conflicts.

The Chinese Government is resolute in its fight against terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms. We will vigorously fight violent terrorism, which challenges civilization and humankind. We will actively participate in the tenth review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and will work with the international community in fighting terrorism and violent extremism and maintaining global peace and tranquillity.

Mr. Lauber (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland wants to thank the President for organizing this debate and welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 70/254, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The adoption of that resolution will make it possible for us to respond to the Secretary-General's appeal and to send a strong and unified message from the entire international community to address one of the biggest challenges of our time.

The Plan of Action (A/70/674) is part of the broader framework of United Nations preventive action, the importance of which was underlined in the recent reviews on peace operations (see A/70/95), the peacebuilding architecture (see A/69/968) and the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which seek to prevent armed conflicts, atrocities, violence against women and children, and sexual violence in conflict. The Plan of Action stresses the need for a more comprehensive approach, entailing not only security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also more systematic measures directly addressing the root causes of violent extremism that can lead to terrorism.

Switzerland welcomes the increased importance given to pillars I and IV of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). That will enable a full and balanced implementation of the Strategy and underscores the need to respect human rights and the rule of law in the prevention of violent extremism.

It is therefore essential today to implement systematic preventive measures that directly address the causes of violent extremism and that recognize political exclusion and social marginalization among its causes. The Plan of Action shows that only a multidisciplinary and preventive approach, together with counter-terrorism measures, is suitable for efficient, legitimate and sustainable action against violent extremism. Not only do extremist groups contribute to insecurity and are often parties to armed conflict, but their actions also impact peace efforts, sustainable development, human rights, the rule of law and humanitarian aid work. Thus it is important that the various actors — including peace workers, security actors, human rights defenders, educators, civil society and aid workers — all be involved. In that connection, we acknowledge the pertinence of the recommendations in the seven areas of action under the Plan of Action.

The Plan of Action offers considerable opportunities for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), based in Geneva. The Plan encourages the identification of new sources of funding, while also emphasizing the role of the private sector. The GCERF has already contributed significantly to shaping the agenda on those two issues and will be in a position to play a key role in funding activities aimed at preventing violent extremism.

Switzerland also recognizes the importance of working to prevent violent extremism at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, especially with Governments, international organizations and forums and non-State actors, including civil society, armed groups and private-sector organizations.

Switzerland welcomes today's adoption of resolution 70/254, which marks the beginning of a process of discussion among Member States and which will be conducted in tandem with the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy scheduled for June.

Switzerland hopes to make a concrete contribution to those discussions through its organization, jointly with the United Nations, of a conference on the implementation of the Plan of Action to be held in Geneva on 7 and 8 April. We have circulated a save-the-date

message to all delegations in New York and Geneva in that regard. The conference will be open to all Member States and to international and regional organizations, and representatives of non-governmental organizations will also be invited. It will be divided into two parts, of which the first, on 7 April, will be devoted to meetings with senior experts, and the second, on 8 April, will be a high-level meeting to be attended by the Secretary-General, Mr. Didier Burkhalter, Head of Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and other ministers and high-level political representatives. We will communicate further information about the conference in due course.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for organizing this meeting and for the opportunity to exchange views on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented by the Secretary-General (A/70/674), which we have studied carefully. We will continue our analysis with the bodies concerned, since the issues raised in the Plan have a wide interdisciplinary impact.

The international community today is dealing with an extremely dangerous trend — the rapid spread of ideas of violent extremism leading to terrorism. That ideology has exacerbated conflicts in various parts of the world and created a breeding ground for attracting new recruits to the ranks of terrorists, especially among young people. This is hardly the first time that we at the United Nations have examined the problem of violent extremism. Two months ago, the Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 70/109, entitled "A world against violence and violent extremism". The subject has also been reflected in the decisions of the Security Council, since it is so closely linked to the threats of incitement to terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters.

We believe firmly that States should play a central and decisive role in countering violent extremism and therefore in any international cooperative efforts in the area. In that regard, we note the reference in the Plan of Action to the principle of national ownership, which we believe deserves further reflection. It is vital that such action be based on a solid foundation of international law and in particular on the Charter of the United Nations, including its principles of the sovereignty and equality of States. The Plan of Action specifically focuses on the importance of respect for international law and the Charter regarding the use of force. We share its view of the interconnectedness of the tasks of countering violent extremism and settling conflicts.

The work of law-enforcement bodies constitutes an important part of our efforts to prevent and combat violent extremism and terrorism, and in our opinion, it would make sense to give it more attention. Of course, law enforcement is not the only way for States to fight violent extremism. As the Plan of Action rightly points out, working with young people, including in educational institutions — creating conditions conducive to their socioeconomic engagement, connecting them to local religious communities and leaders who can explain how radicalism differs from genuine religion — and ensuring that the media are disseminating appropriate information can all help to create an atmosphere that rejects violence and extremism. Another such task is preventing terrorists from using the Internet and social networks to spread extremist content.

Harnessing the potential of civil society is also an important element of efforts to counter violent extremism. We believe that the exploitation of that potential should be firmly linked to States' specific characteristics and traditions, without weakening their leading role in combating terror. We see civil society's primary role as being one of cooperation with the State's efforts on the ground by working with vulnerable sections of the population. In general, in the highly sensitive area of combating violent extremism, we should never use and certainly never impose any formulaic approaches, methods and classifications. It is vital to avoid the perception of international efforts and initiatives in the area as any kind of intrusive mechanism.

Successful policies against violent extremism will contribute to a proper understanding of the scope of the phenomenon and its causes. The concept of violent extremism must include its clear connection to terrorism and encompass a mastery of counter-terrorism terminology in international law and practice. That area has important links to the Security Council resolutions on the subject, including resolution 2178 (2014), referred to in the Plan of Action. The contribution of the United Nations to global efforts to combat terrorism must be part of the context of cooperating in the implementation of the foundational anti-terrorist decisions, particularly the relevant Security Council resolutions and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Concerning the reasons for the growth of violent extremism, we feel that the analysis in the Plan of Action

is incomplete. The events in Iraq and Libya are a clear demonstration of how external intervention can lead to the collapse of public institutions, leaving total chaos in its wake. It has created an ideal breeding ground for the growth of violent extremism and radicalization, which in turn has led to the spread of terrorism in the region and the emergence and consolidation of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Those essentially obvious and not insignificant facts are unfortunately not reflected in the report.

One of the document's key elements is its call for the development of national plans to counter violent extremism. In that regard, we would like to point out that the Russian Federation has undertaken sustained efforts to effectively protect its Government and citizens from threats of extremism and terrorism. Since November 2014 we have been working on a comprehensive strategy for countering extremism in the Russian Federation to the year 2025. Regional plans for implementing the strategy are being consolidated, and we are ready to share the experience that we have gained in the area with interested States and international organizations.

We would like to hope that the forthcoming discussion of the Plan of Action and its recommendations in the framework of the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy will contribute to our efforts to find the most effective and well-targeted responses to the threat of violent extremism.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing today's important meeting on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and the Secretary-General for preparing his report.

Violent extremism leading to terrorism is one of the most dangerous challenges facing our world today. No one is exempt. Egypt has been aware of that danger for some time and has taken concrete action, including, inter alia, the implementation, starting in January 2015, of calls by the President of Egypt to renew ideas, concepts and religious discourse with a view to eliminating sectarianism and factional polarization, as well as dogmatism and extremism. Al-Azhar and Waqf scholars have taken the lead in that fundamental task. During the high-level segment of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, President Al Sisi presented an initiative entitled "Hope and Action for a New Direction", which seeks to prevent youth from falling into the trap of extremism and to get them to make use of their potential and energies (see A/70/PV.14, p.10).

The entire world, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, must be convinced that violent extremism leading to terrorism is not specific to any culture or people. It exists in all States. Our action to stave it off should be universal, rather than confined to the Arab region or Islamic States. All causes of violent extremism must be taken into consideration — as must national ownership, international law and practical law — and the necessary funding should be provided.

I would therefore like to focus on the following observations on the Plan of Action of the Secretary-General. The Plan of Action focuses on the national and regional dimensions more than the international dimension. It pays more attention to the internal causes that lead to violent extremism. Although the Plan refers to as-yet-unsettled protracted conflicts as one of the reasons of violent extremism, greater focus is placed on reasons such as the lack of good governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law, marginalization and discrimination. The Plan does not, however, clearly refer to continued foreign occupation as one of the reasons behind violent extremism, although there are indirect and weak allusions to that factor in paragraphs 33 and 35. In addition, the Plan contains no reference to all of the underlying internal causes of violent extremism that give rise to terrorism, such as Islamophobia and other factors. We can see, then, that the Plan targets a specific group of States, a bias that we categorically reject, especially since we witness the arrival of foreign terrorist fighters from European States in Syria and other States.

Let us be candid: if there is a serious desire to take action, the international community must realize that Israel's continued occupation of Palestine is one of the main reasons behind the proliferation of violent extremism, which, in turn, gives rise to terrorism. Other reasons include interference in the internal affairs of States, affronts to Islam and the Prophet — peace be upon him — under the pretext of the freedom of expression, and the treatment of Muslims as second-class citizens in some States. Furthermore, the Plan of Action seems to focus on the future, failing to stress the need to settle current conflicts and end the occupation. The Plan contains no reference to the need to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, to respect international law or the findings and decisions of the International Court of Justice.

With regard to mobilizing the necessary resources for implementation, as mentioned in paragraph 46, the Plan refers to the need to use existing funding more efficiently. Paragraph 58, subparagraph (l), refers to the development of a proposal for a Secretary-General's fund to support innovative projects designed to prevent violent extremism. It is clear from the contents of the Plan that the trend is to try to use existing resources and voluntary contributions. That would mean reducing part of the funding set aside for combating terrorism and for financing projects to prevent violent extremism and part of the funding proposed for the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre over the coming five years. That will adversely affect efforts to combat terrorism.

It is therefore important to consider the best way to establish the proposed fund as quickly as possible. It is also important that States agree on its characteristics and look into the best ways to finance the fund without adversely affecting other efforts to combat terrorism and implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Most of the recommendations presented by the Secretary-General rely on efforts at the regional and national levels The main reason for the failure to implement such measures has been the shortage or absence of the requisite funding. The Plan does not mention how to overcome that problem nor how to provide the necessary funding.

Paragraph 58, sub-paragraph (b), states that the prevention of violent extremism will be prioritized among the programmes implemented by United Nations entities, in cooperation with Member States, including by integrating the prevention of violent extremism into activities of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The Plan did not refer to the impact of such a decision on troop-contributing countries.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the goal is not to adopt or reject the Plan, but rather to carry out efforts on the ground to prevent violent extremism. That requires convincing everyone to abide by the Plan of Action, which will happen only if the views and proposals of States are taken into consideration while developing consensus, and that in turn requires ensuring the universality of implementation in accordance with international law and the principle of national ownership. We are therefore of the view that the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is the optimal opportunity to take all such views into consideration without adversely affecting the measures contained in the Strategy. Otherwise, the Plan will not be universally accepted, which would preclude its implementation.

Mr. Al-Moumani (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my thanks to the President for holding today's meeting on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

We welcome and support the adoption today of resolution 70/254 on the subject. We welcome the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General in formulating the Plan of Action. We commend its flexible and practical approach, which emphasizes the important role played by the United Nations in combating the terrible phenomenon of violent extremism, the impacts of which are not confined to the maintenance of international peace and security but extend to all aspects of life. We are of the view that the Plan of Action is practical and prudent and will help to rally military and security support in the effort to combat terrorism.

The Plan of Action is an important set of guidelines that help States draft their own national plans or amend their already existing national plans in accordance with the exigencies of States' national interests and priorities in addressing local drivers of violent extremism. Combating extremism necessitates inclusive interactive approaches on the part of national institutions, balancing, inter alia, sociopolitical and educational perspectives. All the drivers and factors leading to violent extremism must be addressed.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, Jordan has launched numerous international initiatives to foster the values of tolerance, coexistence and dialogue, including the Amman Message on Islam, the Common Word initiative and the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Jordan has expressed its conviction that young people need to be the focus of the fight against terrorism and extremism. My country has taken the initiative on that point in the Security Council by holding, for the first time, an open debate on the role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace, in April 2015 (see S/PV.7432). We also submitted a resolution on youth, peace and security, which was adopted last year (Security Council resolution 2250 (2015)).

I would like to make the following points regarding the Plan of Action. The primary responsibility for combating violent extremism rests with States, which will implement the Plan according to their national

priorities, paying due attention to economic factors and sustainable development. The success of our efforts depends on taking bold approaches that avoid sectarian conflicts and close gaps. The continued Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the failure to achieve a just and permanent solution that fulfils the aspirations of the Palestinian people will undoubtedly lead to more violence and hatred. Furthermore, with regard to the Syrian crisis, terrorism and extremism will be curbed there when a political solution is reached. Extremism must not be linked to any specific faction, region or religion; linking it to Islam will only serve the interests of maverick terrorists.

With regard to funding the Plan of Action, the United Nations is a natural partner for assisting States in implementing their national plans. Mechanisms must be established to monitor the assistance extended by the United Nations. Jordan looks forward to discussing the Plan in detail at other forums in the future, including in Geneva, as well as during the biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Sudan aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We would like to make the following statement in our national capacity.

My country commends the efforts of the President of the General Assembly and his Office to hold broad informal consultations with groups and countries, which led to today's consensus adoption of resolution 70/254. The resolution takes note of the Plan of Action submitted by the Secretary-General (A/70/674) and welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative in submitting it. The resolution also stresses the importance of giving further consideration to the Plan of Action during the consultations on the periodic review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy next June and in other relevant forums, including the international conference to be convened by the Government of Switzerland in cooperation with the United Nations in Geneva in April.

The Sudan took a constructive in the informal consultations that preceded the consensus on resolution 70/254. We were committed to reaching that consensus on the resolution on the Plan of Action, which addresses an alarming phenomenon that spares no one, namely, violent extremism. In order to contribute to the dialogue on the Plan of Action that will take place over the next days and months, my delegation would like to make the following observations with respect to the Plan.

The Plan of Action stresses that the phenomenon of violent extremism lacks a clear and agreed definition. It cannot be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group, as stated in the preamble of the resolution adopted today. That is an essential point, one that we reiterate in order to avoid any stereotyping when talking about terrorism and violent extremism. It is not enough to refer to that point in the introduction of the Plan of Action. The Plan of Action should be consistent with that essential point, especially with regard to the conditions conducive to violent extremism. We should also avoid any potential contradiction between the notions of combating terrorism and violent extremism and avoiding overlapping or misunderstanding.

A comprehensive approach to the phenomenon of violent extremism is one of the most important tools for combating it. It is not useful to focus on the effects of the phenomenon; rather, we should address the root causes and main incubators through a comprehensive and balanced approach that does more than focus on the security and military aspects. Indeed, it should also take into account all cultural and social aspects of the phenomenon. In that regard, my country stresses that the General Assembly is well situated to deal with that phenomenon in all its aspects and dimensions.

Secondly, the Plan of Action is not balanced in the way it seeks to address the conditions conducive to violent extremism. It focuses extensively on national aspects through a limited approach that stresses mainly the issue of human rights without addressing other dimensions. The Plan also largely fails to refer to the conditions that lead to violent extremism at the international level, especially with regard to the denial of the rights to self-determination of people who are under the yoke of occupation. We cannot talk about violent extremism without mentioning foreign occupation, which is the main incubator of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and of the violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

Thirdly, it might be useful to take note of the experience in preventing this phenomenon gained by countries that share a border with countries that might be suffering from that phenomenon. In that regard, we wish to point out the initiatives undertaken by the Sudanese Government to strengthen the culture of

dialogue and moderation with a view to combating bigotry. The Government has also created certain institutions to address that issue.

Fourthly, the Plan of Action addresses the conditions conducive to violent extremism in a certain country. The Plan makes reference to a number of internal challenges that are important and essential in that regard. At the same time, however, the Plan fails to refer to external elements, especially interference in the internal affairs of States in a manner that runs counter to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and international law in order to serve certain political interests. Such interference threatens the stability, unity and territorial integrity of the affected States and disrupts their welfare and development. Unilateral sanctions are also one of the aspects that threaten international peace and security and lead to international tension.

The Plan of Action addresses an important problem that demands concerted international efforts in order to combat that phenomenon. The Plan of Action should not refer to any elements that do not enjoy consensus and that might lead to disagreement and might distract Member States from their main task. Therefore, my delegation expresses its concern over the reference in of paragraph 50, sub-paragraph (e), to the International Criminal Court. The international community should support efforts aimed at ensuring accountability in cases where national measures cannot adequately address grave violations, including through the referral by the Security Council of cases to the International Criminal Court or to an ad hoc tribunal.

Members are well aware of the politicized relationship between the Security Council and the International Criminal Court. The Sudan believes that, owing to those paragraphs, the Plan of Action could lead to political disagreement and run counter to the aim of concerted international efforts to combat the phenomenon of violent extremism. That also applies to paragraph 58, sub-paragraph (b), which calls for integrating the prevention of violent extremism into the mandates of special political missions and peacekeeping operations and the activities of the United Nations country teams. That reference gives rise to a number of questions and concerns. It is inadvisable for the Plan of Action to include references that run counter to the international consensus on combatting violent extremism and terrorism in all their forms and manifestations.

Resolution 70/254, which the Assembly adopted today, stresses that the international community stands united in combatting violent extremism. It also stresses the importance of continued objective dialogue aimed at addressing the shortcomings of the Plan of Action and at building on its positive elements. My country would like to reiterate its readiness to engage constructively and positively in the deliberations on the Plan of Action in various forums. We look forward to a world of peace, security, stability and respect for the Charter and international law and without interference in the internal affairs of States through an international political and economic order characterized by justice, transparency and impartiality — a system that seeks to achieve prosperity and development for all the nations of the world.

Ms. Lehto (Finland): Finland aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Finland warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and the adoption of resolution 70/254.

Violent extremism is not a new phenomenon, and we have been working to counter it for decades. However, violent extremism has increased rapidly in recent years, and alarming new forms have developed. Moreover, it has become evident that security-based counter-terrorism measures alone are not sufficient and need to be complemented by a more comprehensive approach.

We need to send a clear and unified signal to the world that violent extremism is not acceptable and that the international community is taking the threat seriously. Moreover, we need to widen and deepen our cooperation further, with more emphasis on prevention. Prevention should be used as a proactive approach with real potential both for addressing immediate security concerns, such as recruitment by extremist groups, and for achieving sustainable long-term results.

It is clearly preferable, and certainly more cost-effective, to prevent violent extremism than to be forced to address its many adverse consequences. But to succeed, that requires a concerted, multidisciplinary effort at all levels — local, national, regional and international. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action is an important and timely step forward. We should be ready to move towards its implementation.

Finland has had a national action plan on preventing violent extremism since 2012. The plan is currently being updated through wide consultation with stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to share briefly with the Assembly some of our own experiences and provide a few concrete examples.

Finland's national prevention measures are based on a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Violent extremism has a tendency to reinforce itself, and its various forms feed each other. If we concentrate on preventing only one form, there will be room for other types and other groups to grow. This approach is also aimed at gaining wide support and acceptance for the measures among various communities. It is extremely important to have broad cooperation among the various authorities, organizations and communities. We have created several models in which various actors work together.

First, our "net tip" system enables the public to submit non-emergency information to law enforcement authorities about any suspicious material found on the Internet. In addition, we will be creating a national help-line service, targeting families whose members are planning to leave for conflict areas or have already done so. Our Information House seminars provide training for local-level actors, such as schools and social workers, in identifying cases where people may be planning to leave for conflict areas and enabling such actors to intervene, in cooperation with other authorities.

I would also like to mention the so-called anchor model, in which multidisciplinary professional teams work with vulnerable young people who are at risk of committing crimes and direct them to the appropriate services. The teams consist of police officers, social workers, mental health professionals and youth workers.

Finally, we have the exit model, based on a concept developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deal with individuals who are planning to leave for conflict areas, have already travelled to them or have recently returned to Finland. It will work in parallel with the anchor model and is designed to be applicable to all forms of violent extremism.

The role of young people in the prevention of violent extremism is essential. Young people have to be more aware and better prepared to recognize and reject propaganda and attempts to provoke them to violence. A key element in achieving that goal is to improve young people's integration into society, recognizing them as relevant actors and decision-makers and giving them a role in preventing violent extremism. Education plays a crucial role in developing a sense of civic responsibility and intercultural understanding and is yet another facet of the inclusive approach. In October, Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Young Muslims Association organized a joint round table on Finnish foreign policy relating to conflict areas, human rights and democracy. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs opened the discussion, and I am happy to say that the response to the event was very positive and highly encouraging.

Religious communities can also play a significant role in preventing violent extremism. Our Government cooperates with Finn Church Aid, a Finnish NGO with great experience in peacebuilding work in conflict areas, in order to involve religious communities and otherwise utilize its expertise domestically. Religious communities in Finland are currently creating a so-called shoulder-to-shoulder approach designed to help them support one another in concrete situations where a group is under threat or has become the target of hate crimes. Finland is also a founder of and the main donor to the global Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, which seeks to improve mediation efforts by supporting the positive role of religious and traditional leaders.

Research shows that there is a correlation between gender equality and a decrease in violent extremism. Societies that are relatively gender-equal are less prone than others to violent extremism. Empowering women and ensuring their full participation in decision-making are therefore essential building blocks in efforts to counter violent extremism.

The prevention of violent extremism is not a unique or isolated project but should be seen as an integral part of the everyday work and activities of a wide range of actors. The importance of working together cooperatively cannot be overstated, and that applies at the international, regional and national levels, as well as among all relevant authorities, organizations and communities. A comprehensive and inclusive approach seeks to ensure both the effectiveness and the broad acceptance of the measures chosen.

I would like to conclude with a reference to a recently published joint opinion piece by the Foreign Ministers of Finland and Sweden, in which they write about

mediation as an effective way to prevent conflicts. It is far less costly, they said, than trying to fix something that is already broken; it safeguards development gains and, most importantly, it saves lives. The same can be said about the prevention of violent extremism.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom strongly endorses, supports and welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

In welcoming that initiative today, the General Assembly has declared with one voice that we stand united — united against violent extremism, united in defiance of its hatred and united in solidarity with its victims. We have all shared the sorrow, anger and pain that the actions of groups such as Da'esh, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram have brought. The Plan of Action that the Secretary-General has presented is pragmatic, comprehensive and flexible enough to adapt to the evolving threat. It offers Member States and the entire United Nations system a strong foundation for better coordination, and it contains recommendations for action that we must all consider. I would particularly like to draw attention to its call for robust national action plans, designed in consultation with civil society and communities and founded on respect for human rights and the rule of law. If we are to succeed, all States must act on that concrete recommendation in their different ways.

The United Kingdom looks forward to contributing our experience and analysis gained in tackling the threat and its root causes and to learning from others. Our national approach centres on partnerships — with faith communities and others, civil society, the private sector, young people and other individuals. We do that across the whole of Government, including front-line agencies, because violent extremism is too complex a challenge for any single body to solve. Everything we do, domestically or internationally, is calibrated to support that agenda. But of course every Member State has its own unique circumstances and solutions to the challenges of violent extremism. So let us all share our experiences in a spirit of dialogue, and in turn learn from best practices elsewhere.

Today is just the beginning of that conversation, and we are hearing some different points of view. I welcome that. Debate is healthy, and this is a complex issue. The United Kingdom looks forward to continuing the discussion in the coming weeks. The conference announced by our Swiss colleague on preventing violent extremism, which is to be held in Geneva in April, is an excellent opportunity to pursue the debate, and we hope for full attendance.

But as we exchange views, we should be mindful of the fact that the terrorists and extremists are also watching and listening to us. They need to know that today we have shown our determination to take action. We have shown that what unites us against their threat far outweighs that which divides us. And by focusing on the root causes of terrorist violence, we prove our commitment to preventing, and not just countering, that threat.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): We would like to thank the President for convening today's debate, which affords Member States the opportunity to express their views on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative and believe that we can best address violent extremism and develop effective responses by taking into account the views and experiences of Member States.

Pakistan fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Pakistan reiterates its principled position against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We also endorse the view expressed by the Secretary-General that violent extremism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. At the same time, we believe that a lack of respect for the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and a willingness to violate them can also lead to violent extremism. There is no agreed definition of violent extremism, just as there is none for terrorism.

The conditions under which violent extremism can morph into terrorism are also open to different interpretations, and that warrants assessment of the phenomenon in broader and more considered terms. We all agree that violent extremism and terrorism should not be associated with any country, race, religion, culture or nationality. We deplore any attempt to do so and urge the international community to ensure that that understanding is fully reflected in its members' national and international actions.

Pakistan has consistently called on the international community to address the root causes of terrorism and the conditions and breeding grounds that give rise to it. We have also always urged that respect for human rights and the rule of law be maintained in efforts to counter terrorism, so that such efforts do not prove counter-productive. That is why we have consistently stressed a balanced implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), including its pillars I and IV. We are pleased to note that the international community is finally acknowledging the need to go beyond security- and military-centred counter-terrorism measures and to adopt a more comprehensive approach. That is something that Pakistan has long advocated, since it ensures that the underlying factors that drive terrorist violence can be addressed in their entirety. We are therefore surprised and dismayed that relatively little attention has been given to some of the most obvious international factors that have so decisively influenced the emergence of violent extremism.

If we are to find effective ways to prevent violent extremism, we must objectively analyse its full range. Flawed and partial assessments will lead only to flawed approaches. If we are to deal with it comprehensively, we must fully comprehend and recognize both local and external drivers. Often it is the confluence of and the interplay among those drivers that lead to violent extremism. Moreover, in today's globalized and interconnected world, we can hardly separate violent extremism's local and international contexts and dimensions. Economic deprivation, political injustice, social exclusion and the marginalization of people must be addressed in a wider international context as well as a local one.

Injustices done to peoples under foreign occupation, the denial of the right to self-determination, long-festering and unresolved international disputes, interference in States' internal affairs and continued violations of the principles of the Charter create conditions that violent extremists and terrorists exploit in order to propagate their twisted ideologies. The international community, and the United Nations in particular, already has a responsibility to address those issues. Doing so diligently will also help to address the drivers of violent extremism and the conditions conducive to terrorism.

Regarding the human-rights-based approach to preventing violent extremism, Pakistan regrets that a number of significant and relevant elements have been either ignored or given too little consideration. Negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination and intolerance must all be countered if we are to prevent violent extremism. Effective implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 is important to the prevention of radicalization. Its violation nourishes the narrative that violent extremists use to justify their vile acts. Xenophobia, in particular Islamophobia, is on the rise in the West. It has so far gone unchecked. It is unfortunate that unprincipled, xenophobic politicians have sought to build their political fortunes by spreading fear and deliberate mischaracterizations of people of other faiths or cultures. That, too, fuels the process of radicalization.

We fully subscribe to the need to ensure respect for international law and human rights in counter-terrorism measures. That is what all of us committed to when we endorsed the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. But what do we make of the foreign military interventions that have rendered not just societies but entire countries and regions susceptible to the chaos in which violent extremism thrives and grows? Do we realize the impact of the so-called surgical counter-terrorism strikes that violate States' territorial integrity and that have resulted in thousands of civilian casualties and left entire communities angry and determined to avenge such impunity? The fact is that 15 years after we committed to making the world more peaceful and terror-free, it has become a much more dangerous place. We must revisit the response that was used to counter terrorism and violent extremism and that has yielded this sorry outcome.

With regard to the Secretary-General's call for national action plans to prevent violent extremism, I can report that my country has already initiated a number of steps towards curbing that threat at the national, regional and international levels. Eight of the 20 action points of Pakistan's national plan for countering terrorist violence pertain to preventing violent extremism. We are fully cognizant of our national challenges and are making focused efforts to undertake educational reforms, prevent misuse of the Internet and social media, promote tolerance and reform our criminal justice system.

My Government has focused on the potential of young people in particular. The Prime Minister's youth programme is geared to providing educational scholarships, vocational training and skills

development, as well as loans to young entrepreneurs. We are also partnering with the United Nations in a skills-development and engagement programme for youth, aimed at preventing violent extremism. Pakistan has led a number of initiatives promoting interfaith and intercultural harmony. Just a week ago, during World Interfaith Harmony Week, we organized a side event at the United Nations on countering xenophobia, inviting a number of scholars of different faiths, who presented their successful initiatives on building interfaith harmony.

At the international level, we remain committed to supporting all efforts aimed at preventing violent extremism and terrorism in a balanced manner, consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Finally, I would like to say that the international community must meet this difficult challenge in a coordinated and unified manner, taking into account the views of all Member States.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): Violent extremism is a major concern for the international community, including Turkey. The most recent General Assembly resolution on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review (resolution 66/282), facilitated by Turkey, urges all Member States to unite against violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations.

There is no question that security measures based on the rule of law, such as the interception, deterrence and prosecution of terrorists, remain the fundamental pillar of counter-terrorism efforts. However, we are also convinced that a broader approach is necessary, if we are to prevent young people from being attracted to terrorist groups, make our societies more resilient in the face of extremist narratives and rehabilitate radicalized individuals. Turkey therefore fully supports the view of the Secretary-General that the international community should adopt a comprehensive approach, encompassing not only security-based measures but also systematic ones that address the drivers of violent extremism at the local, regional and global levels.

As the guardian of universal ideals and concerted international action, the United Nations should play a crucial role in leading the efforts to address such drivers at the global level, laying out basic principles and assisting Member States in designing and implementing their national strategies. In that regard, Turkey welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). As we underlined at the briefing on 15 January, we believe the Plan of Action will be an important reference document.

Turkey, along with the Netherlands, is co-chairing the Global Counterterrorism Forum and actively contributes to its efforts within our Organization. In that regard, I should point to the Forum's Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism. Together with the United States, Turkey is also leading an initiative within the Forum aimed at addressing the life cycle of radicalization.

I would like to emphasize the fact that radicalization to violence is not limited to a specific ideology or belief system and cannot be associated with any country, religion or culture. It takes different forms, all of which must be addressed with equal determination. The United Nations is best placed to ensure a balanced and comprehensive approach to the issue. It is important to accurately diagnose the drivers of radicalization if we are to produce effective policies to address them.

We are concerned about the rising levels of intolerance, discrimination and stigmatization on the basis of faith and ethnicity. Such attitudes aggravate marginalization and alienation, thereby providing terrorist groups with new areas to exploit. We need to take a resolute stance, if we are to cut off that vicious cycle.

My Government is ready to fully support the Secretary-General's efforts. We will actively contribute to the ensuing discussions, beginning with the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review.

Mr. Menkveld (Netherlands): At the outset, let me say that the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

The Netherlands supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and welcomes the Assembly's adoption this morning of resolution 70/254. As Mr. Albert Koenders, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, said during his briefing to the United Nations Group of Friends against Terrorism last month, "Terrorism today is a multi-headed monster. Terrorists are ruthless, resourceful and skilled at reinvention." The Plan of Action that we are discussing today will enable the international community to be equally ruthless, resourceful and skilled in preventing the phenomenon.

The Netherlands believes that international cooperation is key to preventing violent extremism. Countries must look beyond national borders and stay ahead of the curve together. Through its international efforts, the Netherlands reaches out to its allies and partners in order to build capacities and share best practices. As Co-Chair with Turkey of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, we promote further international cooperation through that important multilateral platform, which works closely with various relevant United Nations agencies. With a working group that focuses on the prevention of violent extremism and through the related Hedayah International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, in Abu Dhabi, the Global Counterterrorism Forum is well positioned to mobilize expertise on extremism, work on international coherence and provide best practices and tools for implementing the Plan of Action. The same goes for initiatives such as the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.

Nationally as well as internationally, the Netherlands focuses on identifying and tackling the root causes of radicalization. Within the framework of our comprehensive national action programme for preventing violent extremism, at the local level we maintain intensive and long-lasting contacts with community and religious leaders, police officers, teachers and social workers who work on a daily basis with youngsters who may become radicalized. Although the strategy has proved useful, the number of Dutch foreign terrorist fighters travelling abroad is still rising every month, which is worrying. It is therefore important that we continue to combine our national efforts to prevent violent extremism with international cooperation. The crucial factor is mutual trust. Do we trust each other enough? Do we share enough information? And are we truly willing to work together even more closely to prevent violent extremism?

Prevention is better than taking action after the event. Stopping today's radicals from becoming tomorrow's terrorists can succeed only if we take action both nationally and internationally. The Netherlands is looking forward to seeing the Plan of Action implemented by the United Nations and its Member States, and to engaging in further discussions on the subject in the context of the Geneva conference in April and the tenth anniversary Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June.

I asked just now if we were truly willing to work together. Well, the Kingdom of the Netherlands stands ready to intensify its efforts to work with the United Nations and other Member States to prevent the multi-headed monster that we call terrorism from striking.

Mr. Heumann (Israel): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's debate on an important issue. I also wish to express my thanks to the Secretary-General for his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and our appreciation for the hard work of the President's Office, which has enabled us to adopt today's resolution 70/254 on the Plan of Action by consensus and thus send an important message from this Hall.

When our children are not safe in their schools and our families are not safe in their homes, then we, as an international community, have failed. We have failed to stand up to terrorism, failed to resist those who spread hatred and failed to fight back. No country is safe today, and no continent is immune to the horrific consequences. Today, violent extremist ideologies drive the most brutal and violent terror attacks that we have ever seen. The emerging stories shock the conscience of humankind. At the same time, the flow of foreign fighters to such terror organizations remains strong, with more civilians being radicalized and recruited every day.

When analysing the issue of violent extremism, we often hear that poverty, unemployment and marginalization drive people to become terrorists. Those are indeed core factors. But we must not ignore the fact that some terrorists also come from prosperous families, live in countries with open and equitable societies and enjoy the full benefits of a university education.

So while social and economic factors are important considerations, we must not delude ourselves. Young people from all walks of life and all environments are being drawn to violent extremism. If we are not clear about what drives that process, we will not be able to overcome it. And here we must be clear — the real and most basic threat we face is extremist ideology itself. Therefore, if we truly want to defeat violent extremism and terrorism, we must attack radical extremist ideology at its source. It is the ideological core that spurs terrorism, emboldens its sponsors and motivates terrorist recruitment, operations and

growth. Today, we acknowledge that the prime driving forces behind the ideology of violent extremism are incitement and indoctrination. We see youth being brainwashed — lured by manipulative leaders to a life of extremism that sanctifies death instead of life.

Efforts to counter incitement and radicalization are among the most effective tools at our disposal. We must promote education that teaches peace instead of hate, tolerance instead of violence, and mutual understanding instead of martyrdom. Community leaders and cultural, religious and political figures play a crucial role in promoting counter-radicalization efforts. We must make every effort to ensure that the key voices of moderation are heard, and that they defeat the forces of extremism.

Unfortunately, in Israel the threat of terrorism is all too real. For decades, Israel has been at the forefront of confronting terror and radical ideology. Over the course of the past few months alone, 30 Israelis have been killed by terrorists, and over 300 have been injured in hundreds of attacks. Israel has long understood that in order to counter terrorism, we also have to counter violent extremism, and that is an integral component of our national counter-terrorism strategy. We have supported organizations that build bridges between citizens of different religions and beliefs through educational, cross-cultural and interfaith meetings. We believe that tolerance and understanding of the other are the best way to defeat extremism and radicalism.

Israel welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action. It is Israel's strong conviction that only a unified and proactive stance will enable us to get ahead of the phenomenon of violent extremism, mitigate the next wave of foreign terrorist fighter recruits and prevent the horror attacks of tomorrow. At the same time, the implementation of the Plan must be done in concert with, and not in place of, our ongoing counter-terrorism measures.

Our final point is that just as violent extremism knows no boundaries, so too must our efforts be united in order to prevent it. We must not allow excuses for terror — no ifs, ands or buts. Terror is terror is terror. The Secretary-General's Plan offers an opportunity for cooperation, but we must avoid detracting from its promise. Some in this Hall seek to infuse politicization into this discussion, but that background noise must not be allowed to hijack this important topic. The goal of countering terrorism is simply too important. Now, more than ever, as violent extremism tears our world apart, it is imperative that we stand together. It is imperative that we not use the fight against terrorism as a camouflage to single out one country and score cheap political points. That will lead these discussions to a gridlock.

The State of Israel stands ready and willing to play an active role in the crucial endeavour.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to state my delegation's support for the statement made earlier on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his important initiative.

I welcome the adoption of resolution 70/254, which takes note of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Today, we are facing a grave challenge to international peace and security, which is also undermining our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Increasingly, as we push back against extremists in particular countries, they lash out elsewhere. Our challenge further increases with our inability to reach a precise definition of extremism, which has no specific religion, nationality or culture. The manner in which some extremist groups affiliate Islam with their destructive actions is a serious offense to a religion that is compassionate in nature. Furthermore, the individuals recruited, in particular by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS, to abuse Islam's name have done so in an attempt to justify their extremist ideas and criminal acts.

The Secretary-General notes in his report on the Plan of Action that extremism does not arise in a vacuum. There are incentives that drive people towards extremism, such as conflicts, civil wars and human rights abuses. In addition, the proxy war that some countries are waging to achieve their despicable plans further aggravates the situation. That requires us to work together to help countries resolve their differences and halt the threat of extremism. The Plan of Action needs to address other factors that propel extremism, most notably foreign occupation and State terrorism. The Plan must also address the issue of accountability for States that compromise the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

The United Arab Emirates supports, as a priority, the Secretary-General's call for the development of regional plans to prevent extremism. We would like to

emphasize the following points. The first concerns the promotion of good governance and the rule of law. My country has enacted a number of laws to ensure that the issue of extremism is addressed through the rule of law. Secondly, with regard to the inclusion of local communities and the countering of hate narratives, the United Arab Emirates supports the Secretary-General's initiative to promote the participation of youth in society. There are 1.8 billion young people in Arab societies. They make up more than half of the population. The United Arab Emirates has integrated its own youth into decision-making processes and the prevention of extremism, inter alia by recently appointing a 22-year-old female minister to preside over the United Arab Emirates International Youth Council.

My country has supported the appointment of Emirati women to leading roles in all fields. That can be seen in the recent appointment of the first Arab woman leader of a parliamentary national assembly. The United Arab Emirates also supported Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), which stresses the importance of women's participation in the maintenance of international peace and security, and we have supported the project carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on countering violent terrorism.

We support the Plan of Action's emphasis on promoting dialogue and engaging religious leaders in the promotion of the values of peace. In the United Arab Emirates, the Muslim Council of Elders in Abu Dhabi is working to unify efforts to eliminate extremist messages that threaten human values and the principles of Islam.

The conquest of extremism requires long-term strategies aimed at winning the war of ideas, especially in the social media, which have been used to spread extremist ideas. Therefore, the United Arab Emirates is working through international centres of excellence for countering violent extremism to expose messages from extremist groups. One such centre was launched by the United Arab Emirates in cooperation with the United States.

There is a need for regional plans of action to prevent extremism, which does not respect borders, as mentioned by the Secretary-General. The United Arab Emirates has joined 33 other Islamic countries in the first Islamic coalition against terrorism, led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to eliminate extremist ideas and preserve Islam.

The United Arab Emirates strongly believes that the Secretary-General's initiative should serve as a blueprint for coordinating all efforts to combat extremism. It supports the existing mechanisms, including the important work of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, the enhancement of which was graciously made possible by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The United Arab Emirates also believes that a plan to that effect should be evaluated and approved during the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June. That would help us in our efforts to seek new ways to curb extremism, as the existing tools, such as United Nations Security Council sanctions, are not effective.

We believe that the road to prosperity and lasting peace lies in the promotion of tolerance and pluralism. We confirm our commitment to supporting our partners in their fight against extremist groups wherever they may be. Our responsibility towards others is part of our obligation as a member of the Islamic nation and of humankind at large.

Ms. Vraila (Greece): I wish to thank the President for organizing this timely and important debate on the prevention of violent extremism. We believe that it provides a really good opportunity to exchange views on promoting our overall response to that alarming phenomenon.

Greece aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union and wishes to add the following from a national point of view.

We welcome the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), a timely initiative that provides useful guidance to Member States in their efforts to adopt effective and inclusive policies to face that complex challenge. Violent extremism is a continuously evolving global threat, neither constrained by borders nor limited to any single ideology. It requires concerted action and a comprehensive response. We need a holistic, firm, multifaceted and multidisciplinary approach that will also focus on the conditions conducive to the spread of extremist ideology.

Prevention is an essential element in our strategy and must be a priority, as clearly envisaged in the United

Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We need to focus on prevention through effective means, as well as on building inclusive and accountable institutions and Government practices. That is, of course, a challenging endeavour, requiring a combination of measures derived from various disciplines and involving working beyond Governments by engaging local communities, religious leaders and civil society. One of its most important aspects is the need to address the radicalization that leads to terrorism and the spread of violent extremism through the Internet.

We recognize the central role of youth in our comprehensive approach to counter this fast-evolving challenge. Younger generations are our future and are therefore the key to our success. They are the main targets of terrorist and extremist propaganda. Extremists keep finding new ways of engaging with youth through networking sites, online video channels and radical chat rooms, and they have succeeded in spreading their propaganda very widely, rapidly and effectively. We must build on the potential of young people and empower them to achieve their ambitions through quality education, proper job opportunities and a decent living. Enhancing the values of coexistence, respect for diversity and the rejection of violence will render societies immune to hate-based ideologies.

Debates in the General Assembly and the Security Council and the relevant resolutions have underlined the importance that the international community attaches to addressing conditions and factors leading to the rise of radicalization, violence and violent extremism among youth. To strengthen preventive and proactive action, education is an important factor. Education can promote open-mindedness and tolerance, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Women and girls are frequent targets of radical ideologies and terrorism. In the fight against violent extremism, the role played by the empowerment of women is of major importance. Engaging women as credible messengers of counter-narratives against violent extremism could prove instrumental in the implementation of policies aimed at reducing the appeal of radicalization.

In the turbulent new international landscape, respect for the other, tolerance for the different, and the quest to find unity in diversity are a central message to be promoted. The extremists perpetrate crimes against humanity, destroy centuries-old religious and historic monuments and undermine the foundations of peaceful and democratic societies. Our duty is to protect human rights and freedoms and the multicultural and multireligious nature of societies.

It is in that contex,t and subsequent to the international conference organized in Athens in October 2015 on religious and cultural pluralism and peaceful coexistence in the Middle East, that Greece is founding a centre/observatory for religious pluralism in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. It will be a forum for interreligious dialogue and will encourage interaction between political and religious leaders, the academic community and non-governmental organizations aimed at identifying problems affecting the freedom of religion or belief and cultural pluralism in the region.

The fight against violent extremism becomes crucial in efforts to protect the multi-ethnic and multiconfessional nature of societies. Short-sighted policies based on xenophobia, exclusion and unilateralism and a single-minded focus on security are bound to undermine our efforts to effectively address the sources of the phenomenon of violence, including violent extremism.

The United Nations, in making full use of its agencies and toolkit, is the international institution best positioned to effectively mainstream efforts, create the basis for a more strategic vision and encourage long-term and sustainable engagement at national levels. Member States should actively engage in order to ensure the success of this process.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Allow me to start by thanking the President for providing us with an opportunity to start exchanging views on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) presented last month by the Secretary-General. I would also like to reiterate Brazil's appreciation for the Secretary-General's leadership on that issue. The Plan of Action illustrates his genuine commitment to addressing, in a balanced manner, one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

Before addressing specific elements of the Plan of Action, I would like to make some observations of a conceptual nature. Brazil welcomes the assertion in the Plan of Action that it applies only to violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism. We also note with appreciation that that very expression was incorporated into resolution 70/254, which was just adopted.

That conceptual precision is not a minor one, since terrorism and violent extremism are not synonymous nor automatically correlated. Racism, xenophobia and homophobia, for example, can lead to expressions of violent extremism, which are heinous in themselves, but not necessarily related to the commission of terrorist acts. And the strategies that are needed to overcome the former are different from those appropriate to efforts to counter terrorism.

In that regard, Brazil fully endorses the Secretary-General's assessment that conflating the concepts of terrorism and violent extremism "may lead to the justification of an overly broad application of counter-terrorism measures, including against forms of conduct that should not qualify as terrorist acts" (*A/70/674, para. 4*).

We still lack, however, a precise consensus definition of violent extremism and its relationship with terrorism. We must therefore guard against abuses, including to human rights, that might arise owing to that legal gap.

Based on the commitment to make prevention work, the Plan of Action can be considered a welcome counterweight to the emphasis on military approaches witnessed during the first 15 years of the twenty-first century. It is also in line with our joint efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in terms of prevention, as demonstrated by the simultaneously ongoing review processes on peace operations, the peacebuilding architecture, and women and peace and security. Brazil is pleased to acknowledge that the very title of the Plan of Action reflects the centrality of prevention.

Violent extremism conducive to terrorism can be effectively countered only with an approach that takes into consideration the underlying causes of such extremism. Legitimate grievances that push individuals towards radicalism need to be understood and tackled. Intolerance leading to terrorist acts is more likely to thrive where social, political, economic or cultural exclusion has taken root. While it would be erroneous to establish an automatic chain of causality between poverty and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, it is possible to state that people are less susceptible to radicalism in inclusive societies. As recognized by the Secretary-General, vulnerability to extremist narratives is frequently related to the erosion of an individual's prospects — especially those of younger people — owing to marginalization and unemployment.

The United Nations can play a more effective role in fostering prevention. It is regrettable that the Organization's capacity to achieve progress in that regard has been severely limited by its current budgetary practices. The promotion of development and human rights — which recognizably contribute to prevention — is underfunded, while the bulk of available resources go to responding to peace and security challenges stemming from often-preventable conflicts.

Not a single country is immune to violent extremism conducive to terrorism, regardless of its size and resources. Foreign terrorist fighters have been recruited in prosperous societies. As was rightly assessed by the Secretary-General, the phenomenon cannot be explained solely by a lack of access to economic opportunity. Terrorist groups such as Da'esh have been attracting recruits by offering them a sense of purpose, belonging and identity that they have failed to acquire elsewhere. Genuinely combating exclusion — in law as well as in practice — can go a long way towards neutralizing extremist narratives and ensuring that our societies develop resilience to radicalization.

Discriminatory laws, especially those enabling population profiling, are inconsistent with respect for diversity and the acknowledgment of our common humanity. Brazil has learned that promoting inclusiveness requires active outreach on the part of the State to the most fragile, vulnerable or remote populations in our territory in order to provide them with access to justice and to basic services.

In his recommendations to Member States, the Secretary-General rightly attributes relevance to fighting exclusion. Brazil is convinced that another critical element to be incorporated in our strategy to prevent violent extremism is to address the refugee crisis. We cannot turn a blind eye to those who have had to flee their home countries to survive conflict. Societies that have been demonstrating solidarity towards refugees are contributing significantly to tackling a major driver of that phenomenon. As pointed out by former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, a world that rejects refugees would provide extremists with the best propaganda tool that they could wish for in the recruitment of new supporters, including inside the very countries that seek to close their borders to refugees. In other words,

it is inconsistent to uphold the notion of a collective responsibility to protect civilians in situations of conflict and then turn one's back on the very civilians fleeing conflict when they knock on your door.

The Secretary-General is correct in stressing that conformity with international law is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of our efforts against terrorism and violent extremism. If measures are implemented in violation of the Charter of the United Nations or other bodies of international law — including human rights, humanitarian and refugee laws — their legitimacy will have been compromised, rendering them counterproductive. Terrorist groups aim to provoke Governments into overreaction so as to explore the narratives of abuse and oppression. Unfortunately, many are falling into their trap.

The use of the Internet and social media by terrorist organizations illustrates the evolving nature of the challenge that we are facing. Having been conceived to bring people together, those platforms are now also being used to incite hatred and promote terrorist recruitment. While acting against that sort of misuse, we must simultaneously guard against transgressions of the freedom of expression and the right to privacy. We should simultaneously foster digital inclusion, since the Internet and social media are powerful tools for channelling messages of respect and dialogue.

The Secretary-General is also correct in his diagnosis that protracted and unresolved conflicts often lie at the root of violent extremism. We regret that the Plan of Action does not sufficiently address the international community's responsibility to solve conflicts in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We should not underestimate the recruitment power engendered by a sense of oppression and exclusion triggered by foreign occupation in particular. The dissemination of violent extremism cannot be dissociated from our collective failure to deal with ongoing crises in the Middle East, especially the Israel-Palestine conflict. Our strategy to prevent violent extremism must include a call for efforts to bring peace founded on justice to conflicts that directly or indirectly fuel terrorist agendas. The Security Council has yet to live up to its responsibilities in that regard.

Today's meeting represents the beginning of a debate on the recommendations presented by the Secretary-General and other Member States with regard to how to prevent violent extremism. We look forward to further discussing those issues in the Geneva conference in April and during the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): Let me at the outset thank the President for organizing this debate on the Secretary-General's report on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, contained in document A/70/674. My delegation welcomes the opportunity to focus on the pandemic that goes by the name of violent extremism. This modern-day plague is destroying societies, haemorrhaging communities and disrupting State structures. From regions in conflict to the streets of distant cities, it is extracting a deadly price. At this stage, we would like to offer our remarks outlining our approach to the issue, even as we await a detailed discussion on the subject.

First, the report adopts a sagacious approach by not attempting to enter into the divisive minefield of defining the phenomenon that goes by the name of violent extremism. We in the General Assembly would once again have been subjected to theological debates, even though the need now is for action. The approach of indicating pathways to address the problems with the best tools that we have, rather than going down the route of definition, has our support.

Secondly, given the variety of social, political, economic, psychological and cultural factors in play, there can obviously be multiple pathways leading to the growth of violent extremism. Hence, the interconnectedness between security and development as a central philosophical tenet of the approach outlined in the Plan of Action is understandable. That also augurs well for a role for the United Nations, which has long experience in stringing together intersectoral partnerships to address multidimensional issues through potentially multiple routes. However, we feel that the Plan of Action is full of prescriptions to Member States, but it is low on what the United Nations will do to assist Member States in this venture.

We acknowledge that addressing this malaise is primarily the responsibility of Member States, and many are already confronting the problem as best as they can. Nevertheless, we need substantive value-addition from the United Nations in the endeavour. Even more important than what we face is how we can respond to the threat. What we are tackling is not merely a local contagion that can be addressed unilaterally; it is a global contagion. Global links, franchise relations,

homegrown terrorism and the use of cyberspace for recruitment and propaganda all present a new level of threat. We need significant options for international cooperation, which, unfortunately, we do not discern in the Plan before us today.

Thirdly, it is our view that the current architecture at the United Nations is not sufficient to tackle the virus that threatens us collectively. The Plan of Action provides no solution to that shortcoming. For example, where is the single contact point that will assist Member States that seek United Nations assistance in preventing violent extremism? Having gone through the entire Plan of Action, we did not, unfortunately, find an answer to that simple and basic question.

Fourthly and finally, even when all the numerous prescriptions listed in the Plan of Action are implemented, there will still be cases where we will not be able to prevent determined instances of violent extremism metamorphosing into terrorism. It is our view that no grievance whatsoever — I repeat, no grievance — can justify resorting to terrorism. While emphasizing prevention, we should not shift our focus from ensuring that violent extremists are also subject to the full force of the law, as they pose an imminent and continuing danger.

India is a nation of many faiths and great diversity of beliefs. It is a nation whose unity is strengthened by its pluralism. It is our firm belief that, ultimately, it is the values represented by open and tolerant societies that are the best foil to the forces of violent extremism. Guided by that approach, we look forward to discussing the issues presented in the Plan of Action in greater detail at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Let me first congratulate the President for convening this debate on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

The Kingdom of Morocco believes that preventing violent extremism, which leads to terrorism, must be among the priorities of the United Nations in facing the global threat of terrorism. That threat has become worldwide in scale, and no State or society is spared. Accordingly, Morocco has not hesitated to support the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

Several factors have come together to fuel the violent extremism that leads to terrorism, including the repercussions of the economic and financial crisis, which led to the unemployment of our young people; wars that have led to displaced persons and millions refugees; shortcomings in good governance, democracy, justice and the rule of law; and xenophobic provocations and Islamophobia. All of that demands concerted action on the part of all States Members of the United Nations, which has the duty to help Member States to take ownership of the development of their national action plans to prevent violent extremism while fully enjoying their sovereignty. It is therefore important to support the educational and technical cooperation provided to Member States and to encourage South-South and triangular cooperation. In that regard, we welcome the cooperation programmes developed in the framework of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

The prevention of violent extremism in all its forms, including that leading to terrorism, is part of Morocco's national strategy to combat terrorism. That strategy revolves around a three-pronged approach to security and strengthening anti-terrorist laws: human development, religious reform, and de-radicalization. It is also consistent with many elements of the national plan of action to prevent violent extremism.

Religious reform has included, among other things, the training of young imams and preachers in the values and precepts of true Islam. In March 2015, His Majesty the King inaugurated the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines and Morchidates, which is open to all countries of the world. A deradicalization, rehabilitation and integration programme for foreign terrorist fighters has also been launched. Morocco is faithful to its mission to share and exchange expertise with other African countries and has begun religious cooperation with a number of African and European countries that have concluded cooperation agreements with Morocco on the training of imams and morchidates at the Mohammed VI Institute.

The Kingdom of Morocco will spare no effort to bring religious leaders of all faiths to discuss ways to mitigate the exploitation of religion that fuels violent extremism leading to terrorism. Therefore, in Fez in April 2015, the Kingdom of Morocco organized the first forum on the role of religious leaders in preventing the incitement to hatred, which was resulted in the adoption of the Fez Declaration. That forum underscored the importance and relevance of interfaith cooperation in the fight against all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and incitement to hatred.

In addition, from 25 to 28 January, under the patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Morocco organized in Marrakech a conference on the protection of religious minorities in Muslim societies. In his opening speech at the conference, His Majesty the King stressed the importance of cooperation among the followers of all religions in confronting the challenges of discrimination and intolerance. The conference adopted the Marrakesh Declaration, which called, among other things, for a review of education and religious programmes with a view to highlighting the virtues of cohabitation, tolerance and coexistence among all religions. That is the only way to counteract the hate speech of Da'esh, Al-Qaida and their associates.

From the outset, the Kingdom of Morocco has supported the adoption of a short and procedural resolution welcoming the initiative of the Secretary-General and at least taking note of the Plan of Action. The draft resolution circulated on 9 February by the President of the General Assembly, following consultations with Member States, provided an opportunity to move forward and bring together all positions for the adoption by consensus this morning of resolution 70/254.

The fifth review meeting on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, scheduled for June, and other relevant forums will provide optimal opportunities to examine other, related issues. The recommendations presented by the Secretary-General are relevant, in particular on the issues of young people and the fight against violent extremism in the media and the Internet, as well as in other sectors.

Integrating the prevention of violent extremism into the activities of peacekeeping operations and special political missions may jeopardize or complicate the specific mandates of such operations and missions. That said, the Plan of Action represents an important basis for fighting violent extremism and for creating a space of consensus among all the countries of the world to face that global phenomenon. Violent terrorism and violent extremism do not allow us to remain apart. On the contrary, we must come together and bring together all forces and efforts and, above all, demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of the other. The entire international community must do it together with a more appropriate role for the United Nations, which must lead us in that area.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the value added by the complementarity of the Plan of Action to both the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy — the implementation of whose pillars will contribute effectively to its application — and the Security Council resolutions on the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, in particular resolution 2178 (2014), which links violent extremism to terrorism.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): The delegation of Kazakhstan would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force team and other United Nations entities directly involved in establishing preventive mechanisms within the global approach of the United Nations to the fight against violent extremism, which is conducive to terrorism. Kazakhstan welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to address the phenomenon of violent extremism, as well as his efforts to that end.

We are all aware of the impact of terrorist groups operating in various parts of the world. It is therefore necessary to mobilize regional structures, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, so as to maintain security in the vast area covered by those organizations. Closer coordination with the International Criminal Police Organization is also an absolute necessity.

In addition, Governments must come forward to share intelligence about terrorist groups and their movements and about funding sources for strengthened action. At the same time, support and technical assistance, training, resources and equipment need to be provided to weaker States so that they can fight violence and extremism in their territories and along their borders.

Given the situation with regard to violent extremism, my delegation would like to mention the proposal of the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, to establish a United-Nations-led counter-terrorism coalition with a unified mechanism to defeat that scourge and bring perpetrators and their supporters to justice. Such an entity would bring together and strengthen all the existing United Nations structures into a well-coordinated global effort. In

our view, the current United Nations mechanisms, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, should be made legally binding through relevant Security Council resolutions. Thus the speedy adoption of a comprehensive document on the issue of international terrorism is most critical.

We call on all delegations to support such a bold and forward-looking approach, as well as to develop further the recommendations of the Secretary-General to prevent violent extremism, as reflected in his Plan of Action (A/70/674). Kazakhstan believes that the strategy of the Secretary-General should represent a set of coordinated actions by the international community to prevent the emergence and escalation of violent extremism. We commend and support the Plan of Action as a whole and resolution 70/254, adopted today on thissubject.

We urge that no action be taken that could lead to the destruction of the foundations of statehood or facilitate the emergence and growth of extremist sentiments in society. Peace and security are interrelated. It is obvious that the world has not done enough to invest in sustainable development. Therefore, Kazakhstan has proposed that Member States allot 1 per cent of their national defence expenditure to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Fund.

Kazakhstan hosted a regional conference on countering violent extremism on 29 and 30 June 2015, as a follow-up to the summit on that theme held earlier in Washington. This May, my country will convene a high-level forum entitled "Religions for Peace" under the patronage of the President of the General Assembly. The forum aims to demonstrate how religious unity can be harnessed to combat the destructive nature of terrorism and violent extremism.

Kazakhstan stands ready to join the multilateral action of the United Nations system and Member States aimed at achieving a peaceful and secure world.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.